

How to Make the Passions Active: Spinoza and R.G. Collingwood
Alexander Douglas, Royal Institute of Philosophy, February 16, 2018.

Abstract: Most early modern philosophers held that our emotions are always *passions*: to experience an emotion is to *undergo* something rather than to *do* something. Spinoza is different; he holds that our emotions – what he calls our ‘affects’ – can be actions rather than passions. Moreover, we can convert a passive affect into an active one simply by forming a clear and distinct idea of it. This theory is difficult to understand. I defend the interpretation R.G. Collingwood gives of it in his book, *The Principles of Art*. An affect, it turns out, is passive when it is ambiguous whether we or somebody else is the subject of the affect. An affect is active when we fully accept the affect as our own. In this lecture, I outline Collingwood’s interpretation and then develop it further.

Note: This presentation was given without notes. Here I have transcribed what I said, with minimal editing to avoid repetition. I have left my quotations from memory as I delivered them rather than fixing them for accuracy, though I have added citations.

I’d like to talk to you about one proposition in Spinoza’s masterpiece, *The Ethics*. It is Proposition Three of Part Five. It reads: ‘an affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it’. Now this, on the face of it, sounds like a relatively plausible, intuitive psychological theory – roughly the idea that by understanding our emotions we gain more control over them: they don’t control us so much. I think many Spinoza commentators have assumed that he thought something like that, and there isn’t much more to say about it.

I think it is much more interesting and complicated, and not so intuitive. And I’ve turned to a reader of this proposition, who is not someone we would normally think of as an interpreter of Spinoza, but who is the only person I’ve read who comes close to really appreciating the richness of the idea that Spinoza is trying to convey. The commentator is R.G. Collingwood, the great philosopher and archaeologist. Most of what he has to say about this proposition he says in his 1938 book *The Principles of Art*¹. This is not a book on Spinoza scholarship as such; it’s a kind of work of aesthetic theory – a theory of the artistic imagination a bit like Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*.

I think that Collingwood solves a puzzle that arises with this proposition. And in doing so he also helps us to see the meaning of the proposition. He sees how it can really apply to our lives – what sort of applicable psychological insight is really contained in it.

I’ll start with the puzzle. The proposition, again, is: ‘an affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it’. An affect for Spinoza, very roughly, is what we might call an emotion, in the broadest possible sense. Spinoza identifies desire, joy, sadness, happiness, hatred, love, cheerfulness, ambition as affects. And an affect

¹ R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

is also an idea of what I would call a *feeling* – Spinoza says an idea of a bodily affection. You might not like me calling a bodily affection a feeling. You might think that feelings are in the mind, whereas bodily affections are bodily. All the same, you know what feeling Wordsworth is talking about when he says: ‘my heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky’. You know what feeling Dickens is talking about when he says that the vision of Marley’s ghost: ‘chills Scrooge to very bone’. In that sense feelings are bodily affections. And our affects are ideas of these bodily affections. They are awareness of our feelings at some level. Spinoza tells us that we form *another* idea – a higher-order idea *of the idea* of our feeling, which is an idea of the affect. If this is a clear and distinct idea, then the affect becomes an *active* affect rather than a *passion*.

An affect is a *passion*, according to Spinoza, when we are not the adequate cause of it. It’s an *action* when we are the adequate cause of it. So here is the puzzle. How could just *thinking* about something, an affect or anything else, change its causal genesis? Jonathan Bennett points out that if this is what Spinoza means, it should follow that I can no more convert my affects from passions into actions than I can become royal by changing who my parents were. When something has been caused, you can’t change its causes just by thinking about it. If only!

That’s the puzzle. To solve it, we need to think very carefully about what Spinoza means when he says that I can be the *adequate cause* of my affect. We need to think about what he means by ‘adequate cause’. And Collingwood, because he shares many of Spinoza’s premises, works out what Spinoza does mean by this, in my view correctly. I don’t think that ‘adequate cause’ means anything like what we would usually mean by it. I’m not sure we would even recognize what Spinoza is talking about as a species of *causation*.

To preview, what Collingwood reads Spinoza as saying is: When we represent an affect as our action, we represent the affect as *truly belonging to us*. And a clear and distinct idea of an affect is one that truly recognizes it as our affect. It’s a passion when we don’t recognize it as our own. So Spinoza is telling a story about how we can come to recognize our affects as our own; he isn’t telling a story about causation in the sense we would normally understand it.

We should think about what Spinoza means by action and passion. (And you’ve had Susan James talk about this already, I can’t hope to match that; I’ll just gloss what I get from reading the *Ethics*). Start with what Descartes means by ‘a passion’. Spinoza clearly has Descartes’s theory in mind; he even uses a Cartesian term, ‘clear and distinct idea’. Descartes says that a passion is an action of the body upon the mind (*Passions of the Soul*, §1.2, AT 11.328 / CSM 1.328). So the idea is something like this: when I feel the ocean breeze, and it creates in me that odd feeling of wistfulness, the ocean breeze moves some subtle parts in my body, my body is then led to act upon my mind, and its action upon my mind is what I experience as a passion. Descartes also has an idea of what he calls ‘intellectual passions’. These are the mind’s feelings of its own operations – a bit like what Locke calls ‘ideas of reflection’. The mind might form some volition, spontaneously of its own power, and then we have a passion, which is our feeling of the mind causing that volition. Descartes holds that in one sense we can call this an action, in the sense that the mind is active in it. It’s the mind that creates the volition; the mind does not receive it

through the body from the outside. Chantal Jaquet has written lucidly about this, as has Susan James ².

There's a certain temptation to align the distinction between passions and intellectual passions in Descartes with the distinction between what Spinoza calls passions and active affects. We have to resist that temptation, because Spinoza does not believe that the body can act on the mind. He holds that the mind and the body are one and the same thing, but one and the same thing conceived under different attributes. There is one single thing, but if we conceive it under what he calls the attribute of thought – if we think about it in terms of the mental – then we conceive of it as a mind. If we conceive of it under the attribute of extension – the realm of the physical – then we conceive of it as a body.

Collingwood has the same view. He argues for the identity of the mind and the body in his 1942 book, *The New Leviathan* ³. And what he says is very similar to what Spinoza says. We can think of ourselves under the physical attribute. We can think of ourselves in terms of physicality. Or we can think of ourselves in terms of mentality. But we can't think of ourselves in terms of both at once. This is, for Spinoza, what's known as the explanatory barrier between the attributes. You can explain things in terms of extension. You can explain things in terms of thought. But you can't explain things in terms of both at once.

Collingwood says: you can explain it in terms of the science of the body; you can explain it in terms of the sciences of the mind; but you can't swap between the sciences of body and the sciences of mind. He calls this the 'fallacy of swapping horses'. You're astride an explanatory horse. You're going through the stream. You can't swap horses in the middle of the stream, because if you do, he says, you'll find the stream disappearing, the horse disappearing, and you'll realise that you're embarked upon a magical journey. Pick a horse, and ride it through to the end of the explanation.

Spinoza says the body can't determine the mind to thought, and the mind can't determine the body to motion or anything else. Why? Because these are impossible explanations – to say something like that would involve crossing from one attribute to another. I won't say why he thinks that; it's a long story. But it means that he can't think of passions as actions of the body upon the mind, the way that Descartes does. He can't distinguish between passions and actions in Cartesian terms.

What he says is illuminated by what Descartes writes to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia in 1643. Elisabeth asks how the mind can move the body, what with them being such different things. Descartes says we have to think of things in terms of primitive notions. There's a primitive notion of extension. We explain things about physics under that primitive notion. There's a primitive notion of thought. Our mental concepts belong to that primitive notion. And there's this third primitive notion, which is the primitive notion of the *union* of soul and body. And under that primitive notion, although we can't form any clear and distinct ideas under it (it's a confused sort of notion that we get from sensation), we can explain the action of the body upon the mind and the action of the mind on the body.

² Chantal Jaquet, *L'unité du corps et de l'esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015); Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

³ R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan; Or, Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism* (Oxford University Press, 1942), ch.2.

Spinoza has no third primitive notion. He thinks that Descartes' idea of the *union* of soul and body is deeply problematic. He explains why in the Preface to Part Five of the *Ethics*. Here he draws on various sources. He draws on criticisms that Geulincx [I wrongly said Malebranche] had made of this idea. He also draws on some anatomical research by Antonius Nuck and other people like that in the Dutch Republic. Descartes had a specific theory of how the mind acts on the brain through the pineal gland, and Spinoza shows that there are problems with it. So that's not how Spinoza distinguishes actions from passions.

Nor can he distinguish them by saying that passions are caused from outside the mind whereas actions are caused from inside it. Collingwood recognizes this (Collingwood 1968, ch.10, §1)⁴. He says that a state of mind like an affect is both active and passive in that sense. It's passive in the sense that it's always going to be a response to some external stimulus. But it's also active, since it's a *reaction* to an external stimulus, and reaction is a species of action. Any mental event is occasioned by an external stimulus, but it's still an action in response to an external stimulus. All affects are both active and passive in that sense.

If you're unsure about this, ride the explanatory horse of the science of body. Spinoza believes in a kind of conservation of motion: the body can't spontaneously generate changes in itself out of nowhere, so any change in the body is going to have to be occasioned by some external stimulus. Well what applies to the body applies to the mind – they are after all the same thing. Any change in the mind is going to have to be occasioned by an external stimulus as well. So we get no basis there either for distinguishing passions from actions. What can Spinoza possibly mean by this distinction?

An action is something of which we are the adequate cause, as I said. But then Spinoza defines an adequate cause in this way: a subject, S, is the adequate cause of an affect, A, if A can be clearly and distinctly understood through S. This relation of *being clearly and distinctly understood through* is somewhat mysterious: what does it mean to understand one thing *through* another? Well, all the other instances that you can find of this terminology in Spinoza, and in Descartes (as far as I know), are instances of predication of some sort or other. A mode is understood *through* the substance of which it is the mode. A quality is understood *through* the object of which it is a quality.

This is why I think that Collingwood is right to say that what makes an affect *active* is its being predicated of the subject of the affect. When we form a clear and distinct idea of an affect, and make it therefore our action, what this means is: we *understand* the affect to be predicated of us, belong to us – to really be ours. It's an idea that takes ownership of the affect – that recognizes the affect as our own.

You might think this raises another problem similar to the one I started with. Either the affect belongs to me, or it doesn't. How could thinking about it change that? If it's a passion, it doesn't belong to me. If I'm not the adequate cause in that sense, then how could thinking about it change that? Well, Spinoza thinks that affects are things such that their

⁴ Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, ch.10, §1.

esse is concipi: they are what they are conceived to be, to some extent. You can say, if you like, that he's a kind of idealist about the relation of belonging between the affect and the subject.

You might not like that, but I think he is capturing something plausible about action here. This is something that comes up in Elizabeth Anscombe's book on intention, as I read it.⁵ I think of her example of the person who is pumping the water into the house: you can say he's pumping the water into the house. But unbeknownst to him, the water is poisoned, so he's also poisoning the inhabitants of the house. Well, *poisoning the inhabitants of the house* isn't the action; *pumping the water* is the action. Intuitively, there's only one physical event there. What determines whether it's the action of the person or not is what description we bring it under. So there's a temptation to be an idealist about action to that extent. Whether it's an action or not depends on how we're thinking about it – what description we're bringing it under – not just on the physical facts of the case. There's a similar thing going on with Spinoza.

An affect, then, is our action if we understand it to be predicated of us. It's our passion if we don't understand it as belonging to us – if we understand it in some other way.

There's the theory in the most abstract terms. Those are the bones of the theory. What we have to do is put some flesh onto the bones. What's the significance? This is where I think Collingwood is extremely helpful.

Collingwood thinks that we become conscious of our affects, our ideas of our feelings. This is, he says, the function of consciousness, at least one of the functions of consciousness: to recognize our affects as our own. But, he says, it can be corrupted in its function. He has evocative passages, in which he says that you have this emotion, that you can't help but be aware of it, and what your consciousness ought to do – its proper function – is to take ownership of that emotion and recognize it. But sometimes when we try to do that, we lose our nerve. *Consciousness*, Collingwood says, loses its nerve. He says: it's as if we bring a wild animal indoors, hoping to domesticate it. And then when we realise how wild the animal really is, we lose our nerve and throw it back outside⁶. This is what he calls the corruption of consciousness.

He doesn't say much about why this should happen. But he then says that when our consciousness is corrupted in this way, we still are aware of the emotion, the affect. But now we have to do something with it. If it's not our affect, then whose is it? And here the temptation is to project it onto other people around us, or to things in the world around us. Collingwood has a rather cute example: 'coming down to breakfast out of temper, but refusing to allow that the ill humour in the atmosphere is in fact my own, I am distressed to find my family suffering agonies of crossness'⁷. So I'm aware of this anger; it can't be *my* anger; it must be all of *their* anger. It's a benign-sounding example, but Collingwood thinks this is far from benign. This is a deep, important psychological pathology. It is a miserable state to be in to have a corrupted consciousness.

⁵ G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁶ Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, 217.

⁷ Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, 218, slightly misquoted in the lecture.

I suspect Collingwood might have in the back of his mind here what John Ruskin called 'the pathetic fallacy'. Collingwood was very close to Ruskin; his father was Ruskin's literary executor. He wrote a book on Ruskin's philosophy, arguing among other things that Ruskin has a philosophy. Ruskin calls 'the pathetic fallacy' the temptation to view the world in fantastical and false terms, when under the influence of powerful emotions. He has various literary examples⁸. In *Alton Locke* there is the body of a dead girl being rowed out to sea. And the passage is: 'They carried her across the foam, / The cruel, crawling foam'. Now of course foam is not cruel, nor does it crawl. It's nice alliteration, but why would you say something like that? Why would you think something like that? Why do we recognize the truth of what's being said there in some way? It sounds like something that's just false. But we're under the sway of the pathetic fallacy.

While Ruskin waxes beautifully, as he always does, about the pathetic fallacy, he doesn't explain it at all. Collingwood explains it on his behalf. We see this tragic scene, and we are aware of our own grief. We feel this grief, which is so immense and so wild and so big – it's too big to be our own feeling. And so we think it must be something external. It's something out there in the world. And we start projecting onto various objects. It's the cruelty of the foam: the creeping, nasty, crawling of the foam across the ocean.

A better example might be Captain Ahab and the whale. Starbuck says to Ahab, at some point, when they've had enough of going around and around looking for this damned whale: *Why do you chase this whale? It struck you from dumb instinct. It's just an unthinking brute. What is your problem?* And Ahab says: *Hark ye yet the little lower layer. All the things of this world are but pasteboard masks. Beneath the mask of the whale there is an inscrutable malice.* An inscrutable malice inside the whale! Well, Ahab is aware of *something*. He's aware of his rage at what has happened to him, his bitterness, his shame, his terror of the ocean, and these creatures that can destroy him. He never talks about these. He never talks at all about the feelings he has about what's happened to him. But he's aware of them – only he thinks of them as something else. He's aware of them as inscrutable malice inside the whale. He misperceives his emotion as inscrutable malice inside an animal.

This is what Collingwood is talking about. It is a confused idea of an affect. It's what a passion is, for Spinoza: a confused idea whereby you're aware of your emotion, but you fail to recognize it as your emotion. You end up thinking that it's something else: the cruelty of the foam, the malice in the whale.

The remedy for this, of course, is to form a clear and distinct idea: to take ownership of the affect. But remember that the affect's *esse* is *concupi*. It is in fact what it's conceived to be. Ahab's idea that his emotion is an inscrutable malice in the whale is not exactly *false*; it's just *confused* for some reason. We have to think about why it's confused.

One thing to note is that, as a matter of psychological pathology, Ahab is led to excessive, self-destructive actions because he fails to recognize his emotion as his own. When the Gothic Chief of the North supposedly said 'Something compels me to burn Rome', there

⁸ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (New York: National Library Association, 2009), 3.154.

were no limits to what that feeling could compel him to do, because he wasn't accepting it as his own feeling. If he'd known that it was his *anger* compelling him to burn Rome, if he'd recognized the compelling force as his own affect, then he might have been able to manage it. Collingwood says that when we form a clear and distinct idea of an affect we can fit it into the fabric of our life. We can think: why am I angry? How has this happened? How might I reasonably respond to this anger? But when you feel your anger as a force in nature, compelling you, then you have none of these options. Collingwood says that in that case your affect is like an earthquake or a thunderstorm: something that just happens and compels you. Spinoza similarly says that when we form clear and distinct ideas of our affects our desires can never be excessive.

That's as far as Collingwood's interpretation of Spinoza on this point takes us. But I think there's more going on. Spinoza has a fuller story to tell. Collingwood has a compelling, intuitively plausible (I hope I've made it so) theory about the disownership of affects and the destruction they can wreak. But he never really explains why we should be in a position of disowning our affects. He gives certain hints: our affects are like wild animals, our emotions are terrifying to us, so we push them away. But that's not enough of an explanation for Spinoza: Spinoza wants to explain everything from the most basic principles he can.

To understand how he does so, we have to think about what it is to have an idea that *isn't* clear and distinct. This is what Spinoza normally calls an *inadequate* idea. Spinoza uses the terms 'adequate' and 'clear and distinct' interchangeably, by the way. He usually prefers 'adequate' (I think I have a story to tell about why he lapses back into Cartesian terminology at this point, but never mind). But if an *adequate* idea of an affect is one that represents it as truly belonging to us, and an *inadequate* idea is one that fails to recognize it as truly belonging to us, what's an inadequate idea?

Spinoza gives some notoriously unhelpful definitions of adequacy and inadequacy at the start of Part Two of the *Ethics*. He gives a slightly more helpful explanation in the Corollary to Proposition 11 of Part Two. But to understand it, we need to take a slight detour through some of Spinoza's wilder metaphysical claims.

I won't go too much into this, but: God thinks all our thoughts, for Spinoza. That's the first thing to grasp. All of our thoughts are God's thoughts. But God thinks our thoughts *through* various modalities. And these modes are our minds. God *qua* my mind has certain thoughts; God *qua* your mind has other thoughts. An adequate idea, in the Corollary to Proposition 11, is one that God has insofar as he constitutes the essence of one human *mind*. Or maybe we could gloss that as: an adequate idea is one that God has *qua* one mind. An inadequate idea is an idea that God has insofar as he constitutes the essence of one human mind *and something else*.

Now people have tried to domesticate this theory and make it something more recognizable to us, by glossing this as: an adequate idea is caused by the mind, and an inadequate idea is caused partly by the mind and partly by something else. I've already said why I don't think these accounts can ever work for Spinoza. Everything in the mind is occasioned by something else, yet in another sense active. I propose to take him literally. What he literally

seems to say is that an adequate idea is one that God has as one human mind, and an inadequate idea is one that he has as *more than one human mind*.

We tend to have a dogmatic belief that ideas, I mean as items of conscious thought rather than as Fregean *Gedanke*, are *private*. They belong to one subject and one subject only. Spinoza doesn't think so. He doesn't have to think so, because there's really only one subject of thought for him anyway; it just has these different modalities. So, translating from Spinozese into our language: two minds can have one thought, and not only in the sense that two minds can have identical thoughts, or thoughts with the same content (this isn't like Leibniz and Newton inventing calculus at the same time). Rather, an idea can be in a kind of joint custody situation: two minds have joint possession of one idea. And *only* jointly: neither of them has complete possession of the idea. The idea hovers between the two minds. That's what an inadequate idea is.

What's the connection with active affects and passion affects? We have a confused, inadequate idea of our affect when we're not in full possession of the idea, when the idea is inadequate in the sense of not wholly belonging to us – partly belonging to another mind. And this is a tricky thought. But Spinoza talks about emulation, for example (*Ethics*, 3p31c). He thinks that there is an affect of emulation, whereby we want to feel what other people feel, and we want them to feel what we feel. And he quotes these lines from Ovid's *Amores* ⁹:

As lovers, let us love and hope together,
He who can love what somebody else is indifferent to must be made of iron [*ferreus est quod sinit alter amat*].

The passage comes from a poem in the *Amores*, where the speaker is addressing his rival (Spinoza must have been quoting from memory, since he reverses the order of the lines). The speaker is in love with a girl, and he starts off by saying to the rival: 'If you won't jealously guard the girl for your own sake, do it for my sake – it makes me love her more!' He is in a toxic situation, where he loves the girl, he wants to possess the girl (I don't know if we would call this love), but he also wants his rival to continue jealously guarding her, because he's unsure about whether his emotion for the girl is his own love for her or his rival's jealousy. The emotion itself hovers ambiguously between him and the rival. And this is because the idea of that emotion is not fully his own. That's the kind of thing that goes on, I think, when we have an inadequate idea of an emotion.

Does this mean that every emotion has to be triangular in this sense? Is there always the object of the emotion, and then the other person the subject shares the emotion with? I think the object can *be* the rival in certain cases. These are harder cases to think about. But in René Girard's book on Shakespeare, for instance, he talks about Beatrice and Benedick ¹⁰. Beatrice and Benedick are the most likeable characters in all of Shakespeare's plays. Every romantic comedy is a Beatrice and Benedick story. They're in love with each other, but they wage this war of words. They have this strange competitive hostility; they're both refusing to acknowledge their love for each other. Why? Girard tells us that commentators often say

⁹ Ovid, *Heroides, Amores*, trans. Grant Showerman (Cambridge: Loeb, 1989), *Amores*, 2.19.

¹⁰ René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy* (Leominster: Gracewing Publishing, 2000), ch.9.

they're afraid of emotional commitment, as though emotional commitment were something external to them. In truth, they're afraid of each other. They're afraid that if one of them confesses love to the other, the other will stop resisting. But they're not sure whether or not resistance is the *basis* of their love. Again you have an affect which is hovering uncomfortably between the two subjects: partly manifesting as the love of one, partly manifesting as the resistance of the other. This is an inadequate idea.

They're tricked out of it when Don Pedro convinces each one that the other has confessed love. Then the spell is broken: as soon as Beatrice thinks that Benedick has confessed his love, she recognizes her love as independent of this state of resistance. And then it *is* independent: recall that *esse* is *concipi* for an affect. Benedick does the same, and they live happily ever after.

Here there is an external aid to their both forming an adequate idea of their affects. But the general process is, I think, the kind of thing that Spinoza means. He says this puzzling thing, right after Proposition 3, in the Scholium to Proposition 4 of Part Five of the *Ethics*: when we form adequate ideas of our affects, love and hatred are destroyed. And this doesn't sound nice: hatred we could probably do without, but it doesn't sound very nice to live without love. But I don't think he means what we might mean by 'love'. In all the Roman literature that he reads, love is always an emotion that is, in part, a recognition of the jealousy of a rival or a resistance on the part of the beloved. Spinoza says in an earlier proposition which he refers back to – Proposition 2 – that when we feel something like love or hatred and separate it from the external cause, then it becomes active. He's not clear what he means by 'separating it from the external cause'. If he just means that you feel love when you think that somebody is the cause of joy, it's hard to see how you could get rid of the idea of that person as the cause of that joy. It's also hard to see how that would be a move to an *adequate* idea. If somebody genuinely causes me joy, and I write them out of the story and think that I just have this joy, it seems that I'm moving away from the truth, not towards it.

But I don't think 'accompanied by' means just that. I think that 'accompanied by' here refers to this difficult situation that we have with inadequate ideas, where our knowledge of an affect is split between us and an external thing. When Beatrice thinks that Benedick has confessed his love, she is then able to separate her idea of her love from the external cause, in the sense that she's no longer confused between what is her love and what is the resistance on the part of Benedick. So that's what Spinoza means, and that would explain why he says that love and hate – in his Roman sense – are destroyed when we form adequate ideas of our affects.

It would also explain why he claims that when we form adequate ideas of our affects our desires can't be excessive. Our desires have to be excessive when they're split in the way they are with inadequate ideas. Think of the speaker in the *Amores* and his rival. His desire can't possibly be completely satisfied, because his desire to exclusively possess the girl and the resistance of the rival are one and the same. If he just had the girl and there were no strife at all with the rival, then, he feels, the love would dissipate; it would be a hollow victory. He needs the resistance of the rival, but this means he can never feel entirely secure in his love. And it's the same thing with Beatrice and Benedick, before their moment of

revelation. What they were after was 'a possession beyond all possessing, a love beyond reach of their love'.

Finding our way out of that is what Spinoza is recommending to us, I think, when he says that we should form adequate ideas of our affects. Adequate ideas of our affects allow us to appropriate our affects, to take ownership of them, to represent them as truly our own. And we can only do that by escaping from ideas that are split with other subjects. We must take individual responsibility for our affects and stop hiding from them, in a way, by dividing our possession of them with other subjects.

I hope I've given you reason to think that there's something much more interesting going on with this theory of Spinoza's, something much psychologically richer than the intuitively plausible idea that if we understand our emotions then they don't act us them so much. Collingwood recognizes the full power of the insight. He recognizes that Spinoza is talking about a very strange psychological pathology and proposing a very deep philosophical solution.